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Seventy-third year

Provisional

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Friday, 5 January 2018, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Umarov	(Kazakhstan)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Inchauste Jordán
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Netherlands	Mr. Van Oosterom
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Sweden	Ms. Schoulgin Nyoni
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Mrs. Haley

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Expression of welcome to new members and of thanks to outgoing members of the Security Council

The President: As this is the first formal meeting of the Security Council this year, I should like to extend my warm wishes on the occasion of the New Year to all members of the Security Council, the United Nations and the Secretariat.

In presiding over this first formal meeting of the Council in 2018, I am happy to welcome the new members Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Kuwait, the Netherlands, Peru and Poland. We look forward to their participation in the work of the Council. Their experience and wisdom will be of invaluable assistance in the discharge of the Council's responsibilities.

I also take this opportunity to express the Council's gratitude to the outgoing members — Egypt, Italy, Japan, Senegal, Ukraine and Uruguay — for their important contributions to the work of the Council during their terms.

Expression of thanks to the outgoing President

The President: I should also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute, on behalf of the Council, to His Excellency Ambassador Koro Bessho, Permanent Representative of Japan, for his service as President of the Council for the month of December 2017. I am sure I speak for all members of the Council in expressing deep appreciation to Ambassador Bessho and his team for the great diplomatic skill with which they conducted the Council's business last month.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Tayé-Brook Zerihoun, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I give the floor to Mr. Zerihoun.

Mr. Zerihoun: As requested, I would like to brief the Security Council on ongoing developments in the Islamic Republic of Iran, under the agenda item "The situation in the Middle East".

As this is the first public meeting of the Security Council in 2018, I would like, on behalf of the Department of Political Affairs, to congratulate the six new elected members of the Council on their assumption of their important responsibilities. I also wish the Security Council a successful year.

The protests in the Islamic Republic of Iran started on 28 December 2017, when hundreds of Iranians gathered, in a largely peaceful manner, in Mashhad, the country's second-largest city, chanting slogans against economic hardships. Over the following days, protests occurred in other urban centres, including Tehran, as well as in many rural areas. Some of the slogans also expressed disappointment at slow or limited change in social strictures and political freedoms, and criticized what the demonstrators decried as the privileged position of the clergy and elements of the country's security establishment. In other cases, demonstrators demanded that Iran cease its costly involvements in the region.

As the protests escalated, some turned violent. Videos posted on social media platforms, several of which remain largely blocked by the Government, and footage broadcast by State television channels showed the beating of protesters and the burning of government offices, banks and religious centres. According to reports carried by official Iranian media, more than 20 Iranians, including a teenage boy and a policeman, have died during the protests. Iran's Ministry of the Interior stated that over 1,000 protesters had been detained, although many may have since been released.

With very limited presence on the ground, the Secretariat cannot confirm or deny the authenticity of the images that have been broadcast or the extent of the violence. However, we have received reports that the police, rather than military forces, were responding to the protests.

On 3 January, Iran's Revolutionary Guards announced the end of the anti-Government protests. Recent reports indicate smaller and scattered

demonstrations. Meanwhile, from 3 to 5 January, large pro-Government rallies were reportedly held across the country, with participants expressing support for the Supreme Leader and condemning violence.

On 31 December 2017, President Rouhani told a Cabinet meeting that the Iranian people should be allowed space to protest and criticize the Government. At the same time, he stressed that violence would not be tolerated. Two days later, on 2 January, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei accused Iran's enemies, without naming them, of stirring the unrest. On 3 January, the Permanent Representative of Iran to the United Nations wrote to the Secretary-General, accusing the United States of stepping up

> "its acts of intervention in a grotesque way in Iran's internal affairs under the pretext of providing support for sporadic protests [in Iran]".

The outbreak of violent protests in Iran has focused attention on events in the country. A number of world leaders have expressed support for the Iranian protesters. Others, including the European Union, have called on the Iranian authorities to respect the right to peaceful demonstration and freedom of opinion. Yet more have supported the Government of Iran in calling the protests an internal matter.

On 3 January, the Secretary-General issued a statement deploring the loss of life in the protests and urging respect for the rights to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression and that demonstrations take place in a peaceful manner The same day, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights called on the Iranian authorities

> "to handle the wave of protests that have taken place around the country with great care so as not to further inflame violence and unrest"

and to investigate all deaths and serious injuries that have occurred so far. On 5 January, four United Nations Special Rapporteurs stated that

> "[t]he Iranian authorities should take immediate action to ensure that all citizens can exercise peacefully the right to freedom of expression and assembly, and should ensure that these and other fundamental rights are not met with violence".

As of today, United Nations development work in the Islamic Republic of Iran has not been significantly affected by the recent events. The Secretariat will continue to monitor developments on the ground and engage Iranian authorities with a view to contributing to efforts that address, as the Secretary-General underscored in his statement of 3 January, the legitimate concerns of the population through peaceful means and help to avoid violence or retribution against peaceful protestors.

The President: I thank Mr. Zerihoun for his briefing.

I now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Mrs. Haley (United States of America): I wish a happy new year to all of the members of the Security Council and the General Assembly.

In the past week, what has happened on the ground throughout the nation of Iran is something the world must take note of. It is a spontaneous expression of fundamental human rights. The Iranian people are rising up in over 79 locations throughout the country. It is a powerful exhibition by brave people who have become so fed up with their oppressive Government that they are willing to risk their lives in protest. The world should applaud their courage. The voices of the Iranian people should be heard.

We have debated the proper role of human rights in the Security Council. Some of our colleagues believe that the subject has no place here. They believe that human rights and fundamental freedoms are the business solely of the Governments that control them. The United States does not share that belief. Human rights are not the gift of Governments. They are the inalienable rights of the people themselves. Freedom and human dignity cannot be separated from peace and security. When the rights of the people are denied, the people rightly resist. If their concerns are not acknowledged, peace and security are inevitably threatened. We have seen that repeatedly throughout human history. The case of Syria is a horrible recent testament to that fact. And what is happening in towns and cities across Iran right now bears out that fundamental truth.

The Iranian regime's contempt for the rights of its people has been widely documented for many years. The people of Iran have finally had enough, and they are showing it by taking to the streets. The Iranian people understand the nature of their regime. They understand that their lack of voice in their Government has allowed the regime to ignore them, and to spread conflict and instability far and wide. If we listen to the slogans they

chant in the street, that understanding comes through loud and clear. The United Nations reports that the Iranian regime spends at least $6 billion every year propping up the murderous Al-Assad regime in Syria. The people of Iran know that, and they are therefore telling the Government, "Let go of Syria. Think of us."

The Iranian regime spends millions on militias in Iraq every year. Every year it gives millions more to the Houthi rebels in Yemen, including by sending them ballistic missiles to fire at other countries. Meanwhile, the average Iranian family is 15 per cent poorer today than it was 10 years ago, so the Iranian people are demanding, "Think of us." The regime gives low-interest loans to the elite and well connected. It rewards construction contracts to corrupt firms affiliated with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. It constructs buildings that skimp on safety. Thousands of those buildings collapsed during an earthquake in which hundreds of people died. And the Iranian people chant, "Think of us." Today, the people of Iran are speaking to their Government, and their message is undeniable. "Stop the support for terrorism. Stop giving billions of our money to killers and dictators. Stop taking our wealth and spending it on foreign fighters and proxy wars. Think of us."

Freedom-loving nations worldwide have spread support for the cause of the Iranian people — Canada, Norway, the United Kingdom, Israel, France, Sweden and other countries of the European Union. We honour and appreciate all of their statements of support for universal human rights. But we must do more. The Iranian regime is cutting off Internet access in an attempt to shut down communication among the protesters. They are attempting to silence the voice of the Iranian people. We cannot allow that to happen. Every State Member of the United Nations is sovereign, but Member States cannot use sovereignty as a shield when they categorically deny their people human rights and fundamental freedoms.

I call on all of my colleagues to join me in amplifying the Iranian people's message. And I call on the Government of Iran to stop censoring the voice of the people and to restore their access to the Internet, because, in the end, the Iranian people will determine their own destiny. Let there be no doubt whatever that the United States stands unapologetically with those in Iran who seek freedom for themselves, prosperity for their families and dignity for their nation. We will not be quiet. No dishonest attempt to call the protesters puppets of foreign Powers will change that. The Iranian people know the truth, and so do we. They are acting of their own will, on their own behalf, for their own future. Nothing will stop Americans from standing in solidarity with them.

In 2009, the world stood by passively while the hopes of the Iranian people were crushed by their Government. In 2018, we will not be silent. Once again, the people of Iran are rising up. They are asking for something that no Government can legitimately deny them — their human rights and fundamental freedoms. They are calling out, "Think of us." If the founding principles of this institution mean anything, we will not only hear their cry; we will finally answer it. The Iranian regime is now on notice. The world will be watching what it does.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Tayé-Brook Zerihoun for his detailed information on the recent events in Iran. We are following the situation on the ground attentively, and on behalf of France I have two main points to make today.

First, we are meeting this afternoon on the subject of the Middle East, more specifically the question of Iran. We all know that there are items on the Security Council's agenda that enable us to tackle and treat the various dossiers related to international peace and security in the region, whether their subject is the implementation of resolution 2231 (2015) or whether it is Lebanon, Syria, Yemen or Iraq. In that regard, our role and responsibility is to be fully engaged in working to find solutions to the challenges and crises of the Middle East. It is in that spirit that it is essential to ensure that we can maintain the nuclear agreement with Iran, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, and enable it to be fully implemented. That approach obtained consensus at the Council's meeting on 19 December (see S/PV.8143). The agreement commits all of us, and the challenge we face is in implementing it rigorously. The nuclear agreement is a cornerstone of the stability of the entire region. The reverse side of that coin is that its loss would represent a serious step backwards, with potentially dire consequences, not just for the region but for the international community and the nuclear-non-proliferation regime.

We must also be sure to maintain a demanding and realistic dialogue with Iran on containing and limiting its ballistic activity in order to ensure that it does not

become a destabilizing factor in the region. Besides that, we must continue to conduct close exchanges with Iran to enable us to confront Tehran frankly about the concerns created by its influence in the Middle East and its role in regional crises, particularly through its actions in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Yemen. In all of those countries we must find ways and means to respond to external attempts to assert hegemony, which can lead only to the failure of every effort to stabilize the situation. That is the only way to make progress towards peace and towards inclusive political solutions to the conflicts that have roiled the Middle East in recent years. Despite our sometimes serious differences, which we acknowledge, all of us need that dialogue. France remains more than ever committed to that, while continuing to be watchful, clear-thinking and candid.

The second point I want to make is about the issue that has led the Council to meet today. I would like to voice our concerns about the violence that has followed the demonstrations in Iran in the past few days and about the numerous victims and arrests that have resulted among the protesters. We call on the Iranian authorities to show restraint and calm and to respect fundamental freedoms, including freedom of conscience, expression and communication and the right to peaceful protest. Iranians must be able to demonstrate peacefully and have their views heard. We must remain vigilant in order to ensure that those rights and freedoms are not flouted, as President Macron of France told his Iranian counterpart, President Rouhani, when they spoke on 2 January.

It is up to the Iranians and the Iranians alone to pursue the path of peaceful dialogue, a dialogue that is based on full respect for the fundamental rights and freedoms of the Iranian people. However worrying the events of the past two days in Iran may be, they do not constitute per se a threat to international peace and security. We must react appropriately, in other words, be vigilant as to the threat of violence against peaceful protesters, but be wary of any attempt to exploit this crisis, which would only strengthen extremists and have an outcome diametrically opposed to the one desired.

To conclude, let me say that change in Iran will not come from without; it will come from the Iranian people themselves.

Mr. Inchauste Jordán (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): First and foremost, given that this is the first open meeting of the Security Council, I should like, on behalf of the delegation of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, to once again congratulate the Kazakhstan delegation on assuming the presidency of the Council for this month and to assure it of our support.

The Bolivian delegation believes that the holding of this meeting is not a welcome initiative, because, as has been the case in the past, we are witnessing a blatant attempt by some Missions to bring to the attention of the Security Council issues that do not fall within the purview of this body. We categorically reject the undisguised attempts by some delegations to push for meetings on issues that do not pose a threat to international peace and security, which in the long term risks the Security Council being instrumentalized for political ends.

It must be crystal-clear to the international community that the situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran is not an issue that belongs on the agenda of the Security Council, and we are concerned at attempts to force its inclusion in the Security Council agenda as part of the broader Middle East agenda item.

The position of the Plurinational State of Bolivia was made abundantly clear by President Evo Morales, who condemned in the strongest possible terms any threat to intervene or interfere in internal affairs of the people and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran. We are convinced that, as history has proved time and again, unilateral action and policies of interventionism and regime change can only ever lead to devastating humanitarian, social and economic consequences, the repercussions of which we are still seeing today, in some cases in the context of issues that are before the Security Council.

On this occasion, we would echo the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, which has time and again reiterated its commitment to respecting the sovereignty, national unity and territorial integrity of States; upholding the sovereign equality of States and the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of States; the peaceful solution of disputes; and abstaining from the use or threat of use of force.

Finally, Bolivia is convinced that any internal conflict of any State around the world must be resolved in the framework of that country's own practices and in line with its own sovereign principles, without any external interference.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is a great pleasure for me, as I am speaking for the first time in the Security Council, to wish you, Mr. President, and all members a happy New Year and to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for the month of January. I wish you every success.

I would also like to congratulate the newly elected members of the Council and wish them every success in the two years ahead.

Forty years after our first term on the Council, I take this opportunity to reiterate that we look forward to working together and cooperating with members on all issues on the agenda of the Council. The State of Kuwait will work unremittingly during its term on the Council, in compliance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, hoping that our efforts will succeed in achieving the aspirations of our peoples and the whole world.

We listened carefully to the statement made by Assistant Secretary-General Taye-Brook Zerihoun and welcome the information provided to us, as well as his efforts and those of all staff of the Department of Political Affairs. We take note of the letter dated 3 January 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Iran addressed to the Secretary-General, as well as the press statement issued yesterday by the spokesperson for the Secretary-General, in which he expressed the Secretary-General's concern regarding the recent events in Iran and his deploration of the loss of life due to the demonstrations in Iran.

Regrettably, we have been following what has been reported and statements citing the Iranian the authorities regarding the loss of life among civilians and members of the security forces, as well as the various acts of violence that have occurred over the past few days. In that context, we stress that it is important to respect the freedom of expression and rights of peaceful demonstrators, in accordance with the Iranian Constitution and international law, including the International Covenant on Political and Civil Rights, adopted by the General Assembly in 1966 (resolution 2200A (XXI)), which guarantees freedom of expression and freedom of assembly, among other things.

The State of Kuwait deems it important to engage in preventive diplomacy and strengthen the role of the Security Council in the prevention of conflicts and addressing events at an early stage, when there are signs of future threats to regional and international peace and security. We hope that the popular demonstrations in Iran do not take that direction. In that regard, we would like to stress that, when dealing with such events, it is essential to abide by established principles regulating relations among States, based on the Charter of the United Nations, that is, respect for the sovereignty of States, non-interference in their internal affairs and compliance with the remit of the various bodies of the United Nations. The Council, according to Article 24 of the Charter, is the organ charged with maintaining international peace and security and with addressing any genuine threat to global security and stability.

Over the past few years, several States in the Middle East have witnessed demonstrations and protests that were peaceful at first but, regrettably, turned violent, leading to loss of life, damage to infrastructure, foreign interference and instability in the region. Some of these events had disastrous results that the international community is still dealing with and suffering from. We hope that this will not happen in Iran or in any other State.

The Islamic Republic of Iran is our neighbour, with which we have long-standing historical relations. We are keen to maintain friendly and stable relations with it based on good-neighbourliness, mutual respect, common interests and non-interference. We have stated this in the framework of the Gulf Cooperation Council and of various Arab and Islamic bodies, whose concerns we convey to the Council. The stability and security of Iran is closely linked to that of the region and of the world as a whole. We hope that the situation in Iran does not evolve into further violence. We call for necessary measures to be taken and restraint to be shown in dealing with the demonstrators, so that there are no further victims. Their demands must be heard and dealt with wisely so as to improve their living conditions and prevent tensions from escalating and to ward off instability.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): I thank you, Mr. President, and welcome you to the hot seat.

I would also like to thank our briefer, Assistant Secretary-General Zerihoun, for the updates on the situation in Iran and to extend a very warm welcome to all the new members of the Security Council. We look forward to working closely with all six of them to enhance international peace and security.

The United Kingdom is watching events in Iran very closely. We regret the loss of life that has occurred

during the protests. We call for an end to the violence and for the Government of Iran to comply with its international human rights obligations in dealing with the protests. There needs to be a meaningful debate about the legitimate and important issues that the protesters are raising. I note here that President Rouhani has said that the protesters' concerns are legitimate and that they have a right to peaceful protest. People should be able to exercise their right to freedom of expression and demonstrate peacefully and lawfully. We encourage the Iranian authorities to permit such actions.

No one is forcing Iran onto our agenda. The Security Council is perfectly empowered, through Article 34 of the Charter of the United Nations to

> "investigate any dispute, or any situation which might lead to international friction or give rise to a dispute, in order to determine whether the continuance of the dispute or situation is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security".

The United Kingdom's concerns about the human rights situation in Iran extend beyond the recent treatment of protesters. The continued use of the death penalty, including for juveniles, the weak rule of law, and restrictions on freedom of expression and freedom of religion and belief are all deeply worrying. We call on Iran to adhere to its international obligations and to respect the rights of individuals to freedom of expression, opinion and peaceful assembly. We also urge Iran to permit full access to the Special Rapporteur so that she can fully assess its actions on areas of concern.

At the same time,it is important to recognize that Iran has legitimate security interests in the region. Iran suffered hugely in the Iran-Iraq war. We worked with Iran after 9/11. The Iranian people represent an ancient and important civilization that has a rightful place in the modern world, with a modern economy. But too often, Iran's security interests are pursued in a way that destabilizes and, at times, directly threatens others, supports terrorism and distorts the Iranian economy. These regional activities risk increasing international conflict and threaten international peace and security.

We are deeply concerned by Iranian assistance to groups in Yemen, Lebanon, Syria and Iraq. That includes reported transfers of Iranian ballistic missile parts and related technology to the Houthis in Yemen. Such transfers violate resolution 2231 (2015), which prohibits such transfers without the authorization of the Security Council. They also violate resolution 2216 (2015), which prohibits the sale or transfer of arms and related materiel to the Houthis. Houthi missile attacks in November and December targeted civilian areas. Had they landed as intended, they would have caused suffering and chaos. And there are press reports even today of a new launch. This is unacceptable. We call on all Member States to implement Council resolutions and prevent such attacks, which increase regional tensions and threaten peace and security.

The transfer of weapons to the Houthis will also prolong the conflict in Yemen and the suffering of the Yemeni people. As I have said previously, it is essential that the United Nations conduct a thorough investigation and inform the Security Council of its conclusions as soon as possible. We strongly support the Secretary-General's call for a joint meeting of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2140 (2014) and the Council in the 2231 format. We look forward also to the report of the Panel of Experts established pursuant to resolution 2140 (2014) this month.

The United Kingdom remains fully committed to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. It is one of the international community's greatest successes in recent memory. We welcome Iran's compliance with its nuclear commitments. We encourage all Member States to uphold their commitments so the Iranian people see the tangible benefits of this deal.

We also encourage Iran to uphold its commitments, especially with respect to the provisions of annex B, as highlighted in the Secretary General's fourth report (S/2017/1030) as stipulated by resolution 2231 (2015). Iran continues to invest heavily in ballistic missile development despite United Nations sanctions; we saw launches of ballistic missiles in 2016 and 2017 that were inconsistent with the resolution. We urge Iran to refrain from such activity and ask all partners to report any evidence that Iran is conducting activity inconsistent with resolution 2231 (2015) to the Security Council.

In conclusion, let us not forget that a prosperous, stable Iran is beneficial us all, in the region and beyond. We will continue to encourage Iran to comply fully with Security Council resolutions, to respect their citizens' human rights, and to reduce regional tensions. That is the only way to achieve the peace and stability we all endeavour to achieve.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): As this is our first statement since we became a

non-permanent member of the Security Council, we would like to thank the presidency of Kazakhstan for its work in January.

As this is the fifth time that we return to the Security Council, I would like to begin by remembering Ambassador Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, who represented Peru in this organ in 1973 and 1974. At that time, he pointed out that the Peruvian delegation would utilize its experience at the United Nations and fulfil its mandate by carefully and intensely considering the problems facing the Organization with a view to contributing thoughtfully and dispassionately to resolving them. He said that he intended to follow in the spirit and the letter of the Charter of the United Nations. Peru reaffirms Ambassador De Cuéllar's remarks.

Peru welcomes the briefing by Assistant Secretary-General Tayé-Brook Zerihoun and thanks him for the information he provided on the situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran. In that connection, we regret the loss of human life, we note that the freedom of expression and association are inalienable rights, and we stress that the Iranian authorities have the responsibility to protect all people and guarantee the peaceful exercise of their fundamental rights and freedoms. In the context of international peace and security, we wish to take this opportunity to share three points.

First, we believe that the Security Council, the organ with primary responsibility in the maintenance of international peace and security, should always have the ability to contribute to conflict prevention, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. The situation in Iran, a country of particular importance for Middle East stability, could certainly escalate. Similar situations in recent times in other countries in the region have had serious consequences.

Secondly, Peru is convinced that in order to be credible, coherent and effective, the Council's action should reflect the unanimous commitment of its members, based on a rigorous, objective and dispassionate analysis of the facts. The Council showed that unity and rigour when it addressed the Iranian nuclear issue. Its consistent action, including the imposition of sanctions, was key to reaching the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. My country believes that the implementation of that agreement, as endorsed and monitored by the Council, is today essential to the preservation of the nuclear non-proliferation regime. That is reflected in its inclusion as a specific item on the agenda. Peru prioritizes the preservation of the non-proliferation regime and highlights the need for the Council to remain united when considering issues relating to Iran. In that regard, we note the importance of strengthening multilateralism, cooperation and international law in order to address the serious challenges faced by the international community.

Thirdly, we note that the situation in Iran also reflects the need to tackle the root causes of long-standing regional conflicts, which demonstrate the link between international peace and security and human rights and development. That would require, among other things, full respect for international law and for fundamental rights and freedoms, as well as the promotion of confidence-building measures, dialogue and negotiation. It would also require the participation of women and young people in relevant national processes, disarmament and investment in sustainable development, the prevention of natural disasters, urgent attention to humanitarian crises, and, of course, political support and the cooperation of the international community.

Ms. Schoulgin Nyoni (Sweden): Allow me to start by congratulating you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency and welcoming the new members of the Council. I also thank Assistant Secretary-General Mr. Tayé-Brook Zerihoun for his briefing.

We have closely followed recent developments in Iran. We condemn the excessive use of violence and the deplorable loss of lives. The Security Council has an essential preventive function and we should constantly consider means to follow up on early warnings in the most suitable and constructive manner, no matter what country is affected or which situation is involved. We do, however, have our reservations about the format and timing of this meeting.

For Sweden and the European Union, human rights have always been a core issue in our relations with Iran. Sweden unequivocally supports respect for democracy, human rights and the rule of law everywhere around the world. The human right to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression must be respected. This must be the case in Iran as in any other country. The grievances aired in the protests should be listened to and the issues raised ought to be resolved through dialogue, as part of a democratic process.

We have noted President Rouhani's reaffirmation of the people's right to protest peacefully. We expect

the Iranian authorities to respond to protests in full compliance with Iran's obligations under international human rights law. In this regard, continued and close dialogue with Iran is of utmost importance. Sweden has been in contact with the Iranian authorities on recent developments. In the spirit of frankness and respect, we have made clear that we expect all concerned to refrain from the excessive and disproportionate use of force and to ensure and respect freedom of expression, including on the Internet.

Human rights violations in Iran must be separated from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. Sweden and the European Union are very clear on their full support for the agreement. Its continued implementation is of crucial importance. The agreement is ensuring the exclusively peaceful nature of the Iranian nuclear programme, which contributes to stability in the region and beyond. It significantly contributes to strengthening the global non-proliferation architecture.

Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands): Let me first congratulate you, Mr. President, on assuming your role as President of the Council. I will therefore try to say in the Kazakh language, "Thank you, Mr. President".

This is the first time the Kingdom of the Netherlands takes the floor as a member of the Security Council for the year 2018. Let me therefore start by thanking my colleague, Mr. Sebastiano Cardi, and his Deputy Permanent Representative Mr. Inigo Lambertini and their team for the excellent work done in 2017 by Italy, in the context of our split term 2017-2018 on the Council. Let me also thank Assistant Secretary-General Zerihoun for his briefing. Given the value we attach to dialogue, we welcome the presence of Iran in this session today.

In my intervention, I will address three issues: the current situation in Iran, human rights and prevention. Let me start with my first point, the current situation in Iran.

As the Assistant Secretary-General just mentioned, the anti-Government protests in Iran, which originated in Mashhad, spread to dozens of Iranian cities and rural areas. These were legitimate and peaceful protests by the Iranian people against the social and economic conditions they face in their daily lives. We have witnessed a disturbing level of violence and a death toll that has risen to more than 20, with many more wounded and arrested. As the Assistant Secretary-General just indicated, the situation in Iran seems to be calming down.

We hope that the situation in Iran will further stabilize, especially when it comes to the use of violence. We therefore call on all sides to refrain from any more violence. We furthermore call upon the Iranian Government to launch a comprehensive accountability process. This accountability process should address all cases of serious human rights violations, including those involving the Iranian judiciary and security agencies. An end to impunity for such human rights violations is paramount.

This brings me to my second point, which concerns respect for human rights. The right to peaceful demonstration and the right to freedom of expression and assembly are fundamental rights. They apply to all persons, in all countries, and Iran is no exception. This was also stressed by the European Union and its member States in our recent statement of 2 January.

In this light, we appreciate the public statements of the Iranian president regarding the legitimacy of peaceful protest in the country, and we take note of the increased willingness for engagement by the Iranian authorities on issues related to human rights. However, we have seen that the Islamic Republic of Iran imposed both offline and online restrictions on the right to freedom of expression, opinion, association and peaceful assembly. The Kingdom of the Netherlands urges the Islamic Republic of Iran to end these restrictions, both offline and online.

My third point is about prevention. Without human rights and fundamental freedoms, there can be no human dignity. Without human dignity, there can be no lasting stability or security. Therefore, from the perspective of conflict prevention, the Council has a responsibility to act early and decisively when fundamental freedoms are under threat. Every person has the right to individual freedoms, such as the freedom of religion, freedom of speech and freedom of assembly, and every person has electoral rights and a right to a fair trial. These are not just words; they are obligations under international law. All Governments have a responsibility to honour those obligations.

In conclusion, the Kingdom of the Netherlands reiterates its concern about the recent developments in Iran. We hope that today's session can work as a preventive measure to avoid further escalation of violence. We call upon the Government of the

Islamic Republic of Iran to exercise restraint when reacting to people exercising their human rights, to lift restrictions on fundamental freedoms and to uphold the rule of law by holding perpetrators of human rights violations accountable.

Dialogue is crucial in this context — dialogue within Iran to address existing grievances, but also dialogue between Iran and the broader international community. The Kingdom of the Netherlands is committed to play its role in such a dialogue, especially during our year on the Council.

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, for assuming the presidency. Poland is ready to support you, but we are also very privileged to join the Security Council with new elected members and ready for close cooperation. I would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Mr. Tayé-Brook Zerihoun for a very useful presentation.

Poland has been following recent developments in Iran with great attention. We are deeply concerned about the tragic loss of human lives. All sides should unconditionally avoid violence and exercise maximum restraint. We also wish to emphasize that basic human rights and fundamental freedoms, such as the right to peaceful assembly and demonstrations and the freedom of opinion and expression, must be protected and respected in line with international human rights instruments, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which the Islamic Republic of Iran is a party to.

Iran has a dynamic society with a young vibrant component that wants to be heard. Based on our historic experience, Poland encourages all sides — and only Iranians can do this — to engage in a peaceful dialogue as that is the best way to address the challenges faced by the Iranian society.

Poland would also like to take this opportunity to express its concerns about the growing tensions in the region. Iran has the potential to play a constructive role and contribute to regional stability and security. Therefore, we invite the Iranian authorities and the other countries in the region to work towards a de-escalation of tensions and avoid actions that may contribute to violence, sectarianism or polarization.

Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): As I speak for the first time in the Security Council Chamber, I would like to wish everyone a happy new year. I would also like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for the month of January.

With your permission, Mr. President, I would like to salute and thank the countries leaving the Council, particularly those from the African continent, for the support they have given us in preparing for our membership in the Council.

My delegation would like to thank you, Sir, for convening today's meeting. We would also like to thank Mr. Zerihoun, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his briefing on the situation in Iran. My delegation takes note of his briefing, which brings us up to date on the latest developments in the socio-political situation in the country. Based on the latest information in its possession, it welcomes the gradual return to normalcy on the ground and hopes that this trend will continue in the best interests of the Iranian people. In keeping with its policy of dialogue in a crisis situation, my country, Côte d' Ivoire, calls upon the parties, in particular the Government and the demonstrators, to continue to pursue dialogue with a view to finding a peaceful resolution of the problems underlying the present situation.

In conclusion, my delegation hopes that earnest initiatives will be taken by the Iranian authorities to bring calm and serenity back to the Iranian people, so that they can pursue together the necessary economic reforms that will lead to the country's development.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I would like to congratulate all the members of the Security Council at the start of the new year 2018, with the hope that it will bring us good health, prosperity and success in our endeavours. In particular, we congratulate Kazakhstan, through Ambassador Umarov, on assuming the presidency of the Council for this January and for the dynamic way in which he has set out to take up the work of the Council.

The Republic of Equatorial Guinea is very honoured to be seated for the first time in the Security Council Chamber, and I would like to sincerely thank all the States Members of the United Nations for the trust they have shown in our country. In particular, we would like to express our gratitude to all the members of the Security Council, both the current members and those who have just left the Council — namely, Japan, Senegal, Egypt, Ukraine, Italy and Uruguay — for the valuable support they have given us over the past

few months. I extend this expression of gratitude to all the members of the Department of Political Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, and in particular those responsible for Security Council affairs, for all the support that has been extended to us.

The situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran, which is before us today, is due to the demonstrations that have taken place in several cities of the country. The Government of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea recognizes the right of citizens to demonstrate, as has been recognized by the Iranian judiciary. The demonstrations must be peaceful expressions of the people and must be regulated by law in terms of how they are convened, how they unfold and how they are brought to a conclusion, while also respecting the rights of people who do not support them.

Although the human rights situation in Iran is on the agenda of the Security Council, it does not in principle constitute a threat to international peace and security. Human rights issues must be addressed and discussed in the competent forums set up by the United Nations for that purpose, namely, the Human Rights Council and the Third Committee of the General Assembly, and they have been, and continue to be, taken up in those bodies, and always with due respect for the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of States, as set forth in the United Nations Charter.

The Republic of Equatorial Guinea is convinced that any dispute must be resolved through an ongoing search for a peaceful solution through consultation and dialogue, always in conformity with the principles of international law and in accordance with absolute respect for human rights. Equatorial Guinea therefore believes that frank and inclusive dialogue is the only way to resolve the situation in Iran and that, in that regard, the Iranians themselves must be able to find solutions to their problems as brothers by making use of their legitimate democratically elected institutions, with scrupulous respect for the rule of law.

Finally, we are grateful for the briefing by Mr. Zerihoun, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, who has given us updated information on how the situation of the demonstrations in the Islamic Republic of Iran is evolving, and we are happy to hear that those demonstrations are calming down. We therefore express the desire for a way for intra-Iranian dialogue to be opened up to internally resolve the current situation in the country.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): At the outset, I wish to say how pleased I am to see you, Sir, assume the responsibility of the Security Council presidency. I know we can count on your wisdom.

I should also like to welcome the new members of the Council and to assure them of our readiness to work with them closely, as we did with those colleagues who just left us upon completion of their terms. We applaud the contributions they made.

I would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Tayé-Brook Zerihoun for his very factual briefing on the matter before us today. We have also taken note of what the Secretary-General said in his statement released two days ago. I would like to refer, in all humility, to a few points in connection with the latest developments in Iran.

First, we have no reason to contest the argument that raising human rights issues has no relevance here. What we have doubts about is whether the Security Council is the proper forum for such discussion. The debate on this matter has yet to be settled. What we find a little troubling is that this may not enhance the possibility of achieving unity in the Council at a time when such unity is so critical. We do not say this without meaning it: we attach great importance to the issue.

We are undoubtedly at a very difficult and complex period in world history, when there are so many issues that call for greater cooperation among nations, particularly among members of the Council. The Middle East is an area where there is a great need to take advantage of whatever opportunities we have for diplomacy to work. All countries have a responsibility to contribute to the realization of this objective. Iran also has a great responsibility in this regard, as do others, including ourselves in our own region.

While we do not want to sound self-righteous, we seriously believe that everything should be done to ensure that Iran contributes to regional peace and stability. That is very critical for the developing world and Africa, where there is great hope for the right global context to realize the 2030 Agenda and the promise made in 2015 to eradicate extreme poverty. Peace on the Korean peninsula would contribute to that as would peace in the Middle East — to which Iran should, and could, contribute. No doubt the concerns that people may have in this regard need to be addressed as frankly as possible, while noting that, at all times, adherence to

the principles of international law governing relations among States is imperative.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate, lest I sound self-righteous, why as a country we attach great importance to these principles: we do so because of what befell us as the only country to be abandoned by the League of Nations when those principles were blatantly abused to our detriment.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, China congratulates Kazakhstan on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month and welcomes the new members of the Security Council.

I thank Assistant Secretary-General Zerihoun for his briefing.

The topic on today's agenda is the situation of the Middle East. I wish to express China's principled position on this item. Recent developments in certain parts of the Middle East are worrying. Some countries are going through wars and conflicts; hotspot issues are complicated, intertwined and influence one another; terrorist forces are rampant and spreading — all of which pose serious challenges to international peace and security. China hopes that countries of the region will work concertedly with the international community to improve the situation in the Middle East as quickly as possible and seek a fundamental solution to achieve regional peace, stability and development.

First, we call for a political solution to the hotspot issues in the region. All sides should play constructive roles and persistently promote dialogue and consultation to reach a sustainable solution that takes into account the interests of all parties.

Secondly, we should resolutely combat terrorism, while applying uniform standards and employing all means possible to eliminate the root causes that breed terrorism.

Thirdly, the purpose and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and other basic rules governing international relations should be respected, and the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the countries of the region should be respected.

Fourthly, the countries of the region should be encouraged to strengthen dialogue, deepen understanding and build trust.

The question of Palestine is at the core of the situation in the Middle East. The international community should adhere to the two-State solution, work to restart the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations and achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Palestinian issue as swiftly as possible. The international community should continue to seek a political solution to the situation in Syria as a matter of priority, continue to count on the United Nations as the main channel for mediation and work towards the comprehensive, just and careful resolution of the situation in Syrian as soon as possible.

Pursuant to the Charter of the United Nations, the Council bears the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. The Security Council, therefore, should not discuss the internal affairs of any country, nor is it the venue for any discussion of the human rights situation in a country.

China takes note of the recent domestic developments in Iran. China hopes and trusts that, with the efforts of the Iranian Government and its people, Iran will remain stable and achieve development. The Iranian situation does not pose any threat to international peace or security, nor is it on the agenda of the Security Council. The Council's discussion of the domestic situation of Iran is a practice that is not in line with the Council's responsibilities as outlined in the Charter of the United Nations, nor does it help resolve the domestic issues within Iran.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I had wanted to congratulate you, Mr. President, on beginning your duties on 9 January, at our first regular Security Council meeting of the new year, but the United States delegation has left me no choice but to do it today. That also applies to the Council's new members, whom I am glad to see in the Chamber. I hope our collaboration will be close and productive. I would also like to thank those of my colleagues who have just left the Council whom I also see here today.

Today, unfortunately, we are once again witnesses to the misuse of the forum of the Security Council by the United States. Why is the United States, a permanent member of the Security Council and one of the authors of the Charter of the United Nations, undermining the authority of the Council as the principal organ responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security? After all, it is obvious to anyone that

the subject of today's meeting does not correspond to the Council's prerogatives under the Charter. And the references made today to Article 34 of the Charter with regard to the situation are completely inappropriate. That should be obvious to anyone reading Article 34 again.

We have repeatedly drawn attention to the impermissibility of using contrived pretexts for including purely internal political matters on the agenda. Why has the United States resorted to this ploy today, when the internal situation in Iran is already being normalized? Incidentally, we should thank Washington for that, considering that its energetic messages of encouragement and motivation to the people of Iran have gone a long way to helping to unite Iranian society on a basis of anti-American feeling. It would seem that an irrational allergy to Iran has blinded the United States to what is actually going on there, replacing reality with wishful thinking. Needless to say, we deplore the loss of life that has resulted from the less than peaceful protests. But let Iran itself deal with its own problems, particularly since this is happening now.

The Council's energy is being dissipated. Instead of directing it towards resolving the serious crisis situations in Afghanistan, Syria, Libya, Iraq, Yemen, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Africa, the United States is proposing to interfere in the internal affairs of States. But we do not want to participate in the destabilization of Iran or anywhere else. We would do better to conduct an objective assessment of the situation with regard to a settlement in the Middle East, including of the question of Palestine. If we were to persist in this logic, we would have had to convene a Security Council meeting after the notorious events in Ferguson, Missouri, or when violent methods were used to drive out the Occupy Wall Street movement in Manhattan. Or perhaps we should call a Council meeting when some Western country experiences a wave of demonstrations?

We do not have to delve very deeply into history to cite many examples that have resulted from short-sighted actions involving interference in internal affairs and attempts to change objectionable regimes and impose recipes for democracy. Unfortunately, owing to numerous instances of violations and disregard for the founding principles of the Charter — such as the independence and sovereign equality of States, non-interference in their internal affairs and the peaceful settlement of disputes — the situation in many Middle Eastern countries that until recently were stable has become a horror. The occupation of Iraq on an openly false pretext, the results of which are still a heavy burden to the people of Iraq to this day; the crude manipulation of the Security Council's mandate unleashing destruction and unremitting chaos in Libya; the methodical incitement to internecine strife in Syria and flirtations with terrorists there; the war in Yemen — all of those gaping wounds will continue to remind us of the pernicious ideology of geopolitical engineering and attempts to control the destinies of other States and peoples. However, they prefer not to remember such things, and when we recall them, to pretend that they have nothing to do with them.

We are sometimes asked why we maintain a cautious approach to the concept of the prevention of violent extremism. The United States delegation's attitude to what is going on in Iran is an apt example, because it illustrates the essence of our concerns. The source of the problems is said to be the suppression of peaceful protests and the cruel and undemocratic regime. Parallels are drawn with the events in Syria in 2011; a threat to international peace and security is declared; grounds are thereby established for the necessity of outside interferences in Iran's internal affairs. In this way, the outline is laid down for the vision advanced by the United States and a number of other countries of violent extremism and its drivers. Meanwhile, incitement from outside and calls for so-called changes can themselves contribute to radicalization and violence, whether in Iran or somewhere else.

The real reason for convening today's meeting comes not from efforts to protect the human rights and interests of the people of Iran but from a veiled attempt to exploit current events in order to continue the policy aimed at undermining the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) for resolving the situation regarding the Iranian nuclear programme. Similar assessments of the current situation were voiced earlier in Berlin and Paris. In our view, deliberate attempts to weaken and undermine the international community's adherence to the JCPOA are unacceptable, considering that it represents the fundamental achievement of the past few years in the area of nuclear non-proliferation and diplomatic efforts to preserve regional and international peace and security. This is particularly true when the International Atomic Energy Agency has been consistently confirming Iran's full compliance with its obligations. Instead, the United States continues to introduce unilateral restrictions that run directly

counter to international law. We continue to ask whether it has any means in its diplomatic toolkit other than sanctions.

Instead of trying to involve the Council in interfering in States' internal affairs, it would be a good ideal for the Council to support helpful initiatives for expanding the regional dialogue on security issues, in a framework that could enable answers to be found to many questions and concerns. Russia has proposed an initiative for establishing confidence-building measures in the Persian Gulf region. The relevant provision of resolution 598 (1987), which directs the Secretary-General to formulate measures for security and stability in consultation with regional stakeholders, is still unfulfilled to this day. It would be helpful to consider the Secretary-General's ideas for launching a political dialogue process for resolving existing differences between key countries of the region.

I would like to think that there will be no more meetings such as this one during your presidency, Sir, nor during the next, and that the Council will occupy itself with the work it is mandated to do under the Charter of the United Nations.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Kazakhstan.

I would first like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Zerihoun for his complete and factual briefing.

The position of Kazakhstan is very consistent and based entirely on adherence to the norms and principles of international law. The Security Council deals with issues related to the maintenance of international peace and security, and respects the sovereignty of States. We regret the loss of life that has occurred in the Islamic Republic of Iran, but Kazakhstan considers the developments there to be a domestic issue that does not fall under the mandate of the Security Council, since it does not represent a threat to international peace and security.

We should be very vigilant, however, and we reiterate the importance of maintaining global stability worldwide and in the Middle East, in particular, by reducing violence and preventing the emergence of new tensions. We already have too many issues to address in that region. We truly believe that disputes should always be resolved by peaceful means in order to prevent the further escalation of violence and should not become an inspiration to extremist forces. We therefore join others in calling on Iran to restore trust and mutual respect in its society among all the social groups involved. We note that the level of tension in Iran has decreased and the situation is gradually normalizing. We hope that this trend will continue and that a peaceful solution will eventually be found, based on the mutual tolerance and wisdom of the people of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Whatever the recent developments in Iran, they should not undermine the sustainability of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) for the Iranian nuclear programme. The world community must remain committed to the JCPOA, which has been successful and constitutes a factor in regional security.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Khoshroo (Islamic Republic of Iran): The move by the United States to seize the Council of protests in Iran by some of our citizens for their legitimate grievances — some exacerbated by none other than the United States itself, in dereliction of its obligations under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action — is an abuse of its power as a permanent member and an abuse of the Council itself. It is unfortunate that, despite the resistance on the part of some of its members, the Council has allowed itself to be abused by the current United States Administration in holding a meeting on an issue that falls outside the scope of its mandate, putting on display the failure of the Council to fulfil its real responsibility in maintaining international peace and security.

It is to the discredit of the Security Council to take up a matter that is of a purely domestic nature while failing abjectly to lift a finger when it comes to genuine issues, such as the long-lasting occupation of Palestinian territory — to which this item is dedicated — and the indiscriminate bombing of Yemen over the past three years, which has so far resulted in the deaths of thousands of human beings and brought hunger, disease and destruction to the Yemeni people. All such failures of the Council are all attributable to the obstructionist approach of the United States delegation, and the list goes on and on.

This is nothing but another desperate attempt by the United States Administration to escape forward, as it has lost every shred of moral, political and legal

authority and credibility in the eyes of the whole world. Following the acts of disruption undertaken by the United States Administration, such flouting international law and disrespecting the practices of civilized behaviour in international politics, it is now desperately reaching for any straw to keep it afloat.

There is a long history of United States bullying at the United Nations, but this is a preposterous example. The purely internal affairs of a nation — in this case, protests that the Iranian Government has addressed with the utmost respect for the rights of protestors and made every attempt to deal with peacefully, despite violent infiltrators and direct encouragement by foreign forces, including the President of the United States — cannot be the subject of debate by the world's most important security organ.

I would be remiss if I also failed to mention, for those who may not remember, the United States long history of intervention in the internal affairs of Iran. A continuous pattern of disruption in the course of the democratization process in Iran can be traced back to the coup staged by the United States against Iran's democratically elected Prime Minister in 1953. Hostile acts intensified once the Iranians rose up to overthrow their dictator ruler, who was, unsurprisingly, loved by the United States Government. Since then the United States has, among other things, backed attempted military coups and acts of sabotage in Iran; imposed illegal and inhumane unilateral sanctions against ordinary Iranians; unconditionally supported Saddam Hussein in his eight-year destructive war against the Iranians, including by providing him with chemical weapons; and even directly engaged in military confrontation with Iran in defence of Saddam. I would also refer to the 290 innocent lives lost — including 66 children — on board Iran Air flight 655, which was shot down in July 1988 by the United States Navy in the Persian Gulf. It would be a remiss of me not to recall that the United States shamelessly decorated the Commander who gave the order to fire.

While President Trump may be enamoured of the fact that no protesters demonstrated against his presence while he was in our neighbourhood a few months ago — he may be unaware that they have no right to protest — the fact is that in every democratic country citizens will, from time to time, take to the streets to protest one thing or another, and Iran is no exception in that regard. In every country the security forces — be they police, national guards or others — are present to ensure that protests remain peaceful, and Iran is, again, no exception. However, while the United States accuses Iran of suppressing protests, one can only gasp at the hypocrisy when viewing images of Occupy Wall Street protestors being beaten and dragged by American policemen; or, to go back in time, when National Guardsmen fired on and killed peaceful student protestors at Kent State University; or when watching film of the protests outside the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in 1968.

More recently, we can rewind to the 1992 Los Angeles riots over the brutal beating of Rodney King by policemen. The killing of innocent African-Americans at the hands of law enforcement continue unabated, as we all know, when the California Army National Guard, the 7th Infantry Division and the 1st Marine Division were called in to restore order. A total of 63 people were killed during the uprising; 2,383 were injured and more than 12,000 were arrested. I do not recall any member of the Security Council calling for debate on that issue when the United States military was involved in suppressing domestic unrest. Nor was there debate in 1993, when the Federal Bureau of Investigation raided the Branch Davidian headquarters in Waco, Texas, after a 51-day standoff, killing 83 men, women and children, the vast majority of whom were entirely innocent of any crime. It would behoove the United States Ambassador — who perhaps was busy with other priorities at the time of their occurrence — to read up on these travesties of justice on American soil before condemning others for far less.

But it is not just the United States that has an unenviable record in dealing with protestors. In 2005 in France, then Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy declared a zero-tolerance policy towards protests emanating from the deprived suburbs of Paris and other major French cities, referring to demonstrators — largely poor immigrants — as "scum". With almost 3,000 arrests and several deaths, the unrest was quelled only to re-emerge in multiple other forms, most recently in 2017, when the police rape of a young French citizen of African origin once again triggered protests. I do not, however, recall the Security Council being summoned for a debate on this.

In 2011 in the United Kingdom, then Home Secretary Theresa May utterly condemned the violence amid protests in her country, saying that such

disregard for public safety and property would not be tolerated. Meanwhile, Prime Minister David Cameron warned rioters,

> "You will feel the full force of the law. And if you are old enough to commit these crimes, you are old enough to face the punishment."

In the span of merely a few days, some 3,100 arrests were made. The authorities having been told that they could ignore existing sentencing guidelines, two young men who had promoted riots via Facebook, with the proposed disturbances not having been attended by any other people, were handed four-year sentences. I do not recall any country among the self-described civilized democracies bringing any of these reactions to protests to the attention of, let alone opening a debate at, the Security Council.

We have hard evidence of the violence in Iran committed by a handful of the protestors, in some cases resulting in the deaths of policemen and security officers, having very clearly been directed from abroad. These violent elements surfaced in the crowds as early as Friday evening last week, at the inception of the protests. At that point, the hands of elements from outside Iran, including instigators based in the United States and Europe, began to be visible. The incitements to violence included encouraging and training people to use Molotov cocktails, seize ammunition depots and stage an armed uprising.

One United States resident took to social media to order the killing of 120 members of our security forces, threatening that those to be included among the killed were their families in their homes. This same United States resident publicly stated to United States media, with a complete sense of impunity, that they should burn down Government mosques and police stations. It was clear enough not just to us but also to third parties that Telegram Messenger executives decided to block some of the violence-inciting channels, citing a line one should not cross.

All of this is also well documented in the mainstream media. In one case, a man with an extensive criminal record captured a fire engine and ran it over a car, murdering the driver and his 12-year-old son. In some other cases, hooligans became involved and looted shops and banks. Altogether the peaceful, legitimate protests — which my Government has emphatically confirmed are a constitutional right that has been respected since the Islamic Revolution — were abused and hijacked to stage vandalism, hooliganism and, in several cases, the firing of weapons.

President Trump and some other United States politicians have enjoined the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) and its patrons in our region to openly incite and encourage violence. It is the ultimate irony that the country whose Head of State has thrown his lot in with those visiting violence and destruction on Iran should have its United Nations Ambassador, who has a history of ignorant and belligerent comments against my country, bring it as an issue for debate to the Security Council.

If anything, it is Iran that should be demanding a debate and investigation into how and why foreign elements are allowed with impunity to encourage and support unrest and violence in another sovereign and founding State Member of the United Nations. For example, let us debate why the United States has failed, in spite of repeated official requests, to stop the incitement to violence and the murder of innocent civilians from its territory, or why some European countries continue to provide safe haven to terrorists who are inciting violence and armed rioting as we speak. Why are social media sites that promote and teach the use of Molotov cocktails and boast about people using arms to kill in Iran operate freely in their territory, in spite of clear evidence? These are the real issues that need to be addressed.

In order to make this farce into something more than a mere waste of time, let us discuss something else that the Council has not but should deal with. The free flow of information has brought with it the spread of fake news and other forms of information wars. These threats are common to all free and sovereign nations. We are not alone in finding it necessary to formulate solutions to these challenges. Recently, French President Macron also lauded efforts to increase transparency about the ownership of websites, including their foreign funding, and the further empowerment of Government agencies to fight against any attempt at destabilization by television stations controlled or influenced by foreign States. He also suggested countering social media channels used as propaganda by introducing laws to disclose the source of funding for particular sponsored content.

Such measures are needed not simply to fight back against fake news, rioters and electoral interference, but also and more ominously in the fight against terrorists, including ISIS. That fight is not zero sum; we will either win together or lose together.

The meeting rose at 4.45 p.m.